

- Changes Hall asked for were included in updated legislation -

Washington, DC – U.S. Rep. John Hall (D-Dover) announced today that important changes he asked for have been made to the House health insurance reform bill: The Affordable Health Care for America Act (H.R. 3962). Improvements that Congressman Hall pushed for will provide more affordable, stable health care for the middle class, senior citizens, and small business owners and employees.

Lowens Costs for the Middle Class, No Tax Increases for Hudson Valley Families

The Affordable Health Care for America Act will lower costs for middle class families who already have health insurance. As a result of the insurance reforms in the bill, insurance premiums will decrease and those with insurance will no longer have to pay co-pays or deductibles for preventative care. Insurance companies will no longer be allowed to increase rates due to sickness or cap coverage. The bill caps annual out-of-pocket costs at \$5,000 for singles and \$10,000 for families and eliminates lifetime limits on insurance coverage, ensuring that no citizen will have to face financial ruin because of health care costs.

Congressman Hall fought hard to make sure those middle class families in areas like the Hudson Valley, with comparatively higher salaries due to higher costs of living, would not see any tax increases due to health insurance reform. The original health care bill (H.R. 3200) that was introduced this summer applied a surcharge to adjusted gross incomes exceeding \$350,000 (married filing a joint return) and \$280,000 (single). Thanks to urging from Congressman Hall and others, this legislation will not tax a single dollar of income below \$1 million for couples (\$500,000 for singles). While the wealthiest 0.3% of Americans will see a small surcharge on the portions of their adjusted gross incomes that are over \$1 million, 99.49% of the residents of New York's 19th Congressional District will not be affected.

"Hudson Valley families are being squeezed from all sides in this economy," said Congressman Hall. "I would not allow middle class families in New York to be taxed one penny. This health insurance reform will provide meaningful cost savings to families: lower premiums and reduced out-of-pocket health care costs."

Requests from Rep. Hall included in two letters to the House Leadership were addressed in the current legislation:

More choices, lower premiums for Small Businesses

Congressman Hall made the following request to House Leadership this summer that was addressed in the updated legislation:

"Small Businesses are the engine of our economy, employing more than 58 percent of the private workforce and creating 60 to 80 percent of all new jobs. If our economy is to be strong, then we must ensure that our small businesses are strong. We therefore appeal that any health care reform policy considered by Congress be affordable for both small business owners and their employees. Any proposal that simply replaces one crippling expense with another is not reform at all, and is something we cannot support."

What's New in the Affordable Health Care for America Act: Small Employer Exemption:

- Exempts 86 percent of all small businesses from the requirement to offer or contribute to coverage. Businesses with payrolls under \$500,000 (instead of \$250,000 as originally proposed) are exempt.
- Decreases obligations for employers with payrolls between \$500,000 and \$750,000 by graduating the application of the contribution. The bill requires only businesses with annual payrolls over \$750,000 (instead of \$400,000, as originally proposed in HR 3200) to contribute the full eight percent.

Small Employers and the Exchange:

- Increases the size of small employers automatically allowed to purchase coverage through the Exchange to at least 100 employees within the first three years; permits additional expansion to even larger employers in future years.

Making Prescription Drugs Affordable for Seniors

Congressman Hall wrote to House leadership on October 1 asking that:

"Any health care legislation signed into law should give authority for the Secretary of Health and Human Services to negotiate with drug companies to lower drug prices with the Medicare Part D program."

What's New in the Bill: Secretarial Negotiation of Drug Prices in Medicare:

- Secretary of Health and Human Services is required to negotiate drug prices on behalf of Medicare beneficiaries.

In addition to those changes, Congressman Hall is happy to announce the new version:

- Begins closing the Medicare Part D Donut Hole immediately.
- Provides immediate help for the uninsured with preexisting conditions.
- Prohibits acts of domestic violence from being treated as a pre-existing condition.
- Allows individuals up to age 27 not otherwise covered to remain on their parents' health insurance at their parents' discretion.
- Meets President Obama's commitment by reducing the net cost of new coverage to less than \$900 billion.

Additional changes in the current bill, a summary of the bill, and further information can be found on Congressman Hall's website at www.johnhall.house.gov

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